DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 846 CS 204 031

AUTHOR Gallo, Donald R., Ed.
TITLE Teaching Writing: Advice From the Professionals.
INSTITUTION Connecticut Council of Teachers of English.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 35p.; Connecticut Council of Teachers of English is an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English
JOURNAL CIT Connecticut English Journal; v8 n2 Entire Issue Spr 1977

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Authors; *Composition (Literary); *Composition Skills (Literary); Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; *English Instruction; *Teaching Techniques; *Writing; Writing Skills

ABSTRACT

The 20 articles in this publication, contributed by professional writers living in Connecticut, address the issue of what the schools can do to improve the writing of students at the elementary and high school levels. A wide range of advice and opinions is stated. Many suggestions for teachers are given, including the following: (1) encourage the love of reading by dictating a favorite passage to be written down by the students; (2) have students edit their own work while the teacher edits a copy of it, then compare results; (3) have the students memorize poems or study French in order to acquire a feel for the English language and an understanding of English grammar; (4) insist on wide reading, especially of poetry; (5) write along with the students, showing them that writing is both fun and difficult and encouraging the practice of revisions; and (6) abolish objective testing and go back to essays. Finally, the publication includes a summary of the new copyright law and fair-use guidelines and gives the addresses and biographical sketches of the professional writers whose comments are provided. (CC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ED151846

CS204031

Connecticut English Journal

The Journal of the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English

Editor: Donald R. Gallo

Volume 8 . Spring 1977 . Number 2

Teaching Writing: Advice From The Professionals

The Connecticut English Journal is published in the fall and spring by the Connecticut Council of Teachers of English. Subscription is included in annual membership dues ($5.00) which should be sent to Mr. Charles Phelps, Wood Creek Road, RD 4, New Fairfield, Connecticut 06816. For single copies of this issue, write to the editor and include a check for $1.50 made out to CCTE. Back issues more than one year old are available at varying prices from Mr. Richard Zahner, Bunnell High School, Stratford, Connecticut 06497.

Materials for publication and all communications regarding the journal should be sent to the editor: Dr. Donald R. Gallo, English Department, Central Connecticut State College, New Britain, Connecticut 06050. Although this journal intends to solicit manuscripts around particular themes for future issues, unsolicited manuscripts may be sent to the editor, accompanied by a self-addressed return envelope to which sufficient postage is clipped.

--Member of the NCTE Affiliate Information Exchange Agreement--

Table of Contents

PREFACE iii

PARTNERSHIP IN PLEASURE
John Hersey 1

STRUCTURED EXPOSITION
William Manchester 2

ON LEARNING TO WRITE
Kit Reed 3

TEACHERS, HOME, LANGUAGE
Arthur Miller 4

OLD STARTS--NEW BEGINNINGS
Binnie Klein 5

CORRECTNESS IN ALL DETAILS
Paul Horgan 7

BY GOING ABOUT IT
Mary Stolz 8

WORDS IN THE HANDS OF THE MASTERS
William Styron 10

A FEELING FOR LANGUAGE
Malcolm Cowley 10

BEYOND CORRECTNESS: WRITING POETRY IN THE SCHOOLS--
OR, THE SHORT END OF THE PUMP ATTENDANT'S PENCIL
Alexander Taylor 11

THOSE FIRST TWO R'S
Hal Borland 14

BACK TO ESSAYS
Eugene V. Rostow 15

WRITE AND IMPROVE IT
Peter De Vries 16

STANDARDS
Barbara Tuchman 16

LURKING SOMEWHERE IN THE INNARDS
Herman Raucher 17

EVERYONE IS INARTICULATE
Richard Wilbur 20

ADVICE TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
Robert Newton Peck 20

THE WAY I SEE IT
Eric Sloane 21

LINED PAPER
Elizabeth George Speare 23

SUMMARY OF THE NEW COPYRIGHT LAW AND FAIR USE BY TEACHERS . . 26

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF CONTRIBUTORS 27

ADDRESSES OF CONNECTICUT AUTHORS 30

Preface

Much has been written in recent months about the steady decline in writing performance among today's teenagers. Although the causes of the decline are far from obvious, and although there is no research evidence to support any theory of causation for the decline, many critics have used the occasion to attack their favorite targets--from too much television at home to too much permissiveness at school. Most of those ill-founded opinions appearing in the press and in popular news magazines have been written by journalists and educational critics. Few well-respected novelists, poets, essayists, dramatists, and writers of books for children and young adults have been asked to express their views or suggest remedies.

So we decided to ask the opinions and seek the advice of professional writers who live in Connecticut. Being close to the literary and publishing world of New York City, Connecticut is fortunate in being the residence of numerous professional writers of great stature.

Unfortunately, there was no master list of names and addresses for those writers; thus a diligent search had to be conducted to discover just which writers did live here. The Connecticut Library Line was helpful in locating an old list of writers which the University of Bridgeport had compiled for a conference in 1968 and for providing a copy of a listing of Connecticut poets who had traveled on the Poetry Circuit. Other names were suggested by friends and colleagues most notably by Patti Craw who teaches in Westport. Phone books and WHO'S WHO provided or confirmed addresses.

During November, December, and January, we sent letters to the forty most prominent authors we were able to locate, asking them what they would like to see the schools do to improve the writing of students. We asked:

> If you were invited to teach English in your local high school (or elementary, middle, or junior high school), what kinds of writing experiences would you organize for your students? What kinds of writing and what specific skills are most important for students to master for today's world? How important are attitudes about writing, and how should teachers develop those attitudes in students? What kinds of writing experiences should English teachers themselves have?

We asked that the authors write a well-developed article of several pages or just send a few rambling thoughts on a post card, whatever they could take time to write. As a professional journal with limited funds, we could offer no honorarium, only

our appreciation and two complementary copies of this issue. As you can see upon skimming through this issue, the response we received from Connecticut writers was gratifying.

Not all the authors we wrote to responded. Five of the forty authors never answered our initial inquiry. We had an incorrect address on two others. A few authors indicated their inability to write something at this time: Faith Baldwin was seriously ill; A. E. Hotchner was leaving for France; and Robert Penn Warren, Eve Merriam, William MacKeller, Alvin Josephy, Jr., Maurice Sendak, and others were too involved in writing projects at the time to take, as Elia Kazan said, "any side excursions." Perhaps some chose not to write because we offered no remuneration, though only one said so. Doris Orgel wrote:

> I'm in sympathy with your aims, but hold fast to the following principle: writers are among the most underpaid groups in the country, and ought not--except under unusual circumstances--undertake assignments without pay. No offense!

Nevertheless, the number of professional writers who did take their valuable time to write something is impressive. Within these pages are original comments by a Newbery Award winner and five recipients of Pulitzer Prizes, plus winners of numerous other awards and honors for writing. In fact, this issue probably contains one of the most impressive collections of statements about teaching writing in public schools that has ever been collected from such a variety of distinguished professional writers.

Although the individual comments of these professional writers offer no clear solution to overcoming the writing problems in our schools--in fact many suggestions are contradictory and some have been shown by careful research to be unsound teaching practices--the combined effect of their suggestions is impelling. The most consistent advice seems to urge teachers to encourage both wide reading and intensive writing among their students and suggests that, at the least, writing deserves far more attention than it has had in the past several years. We leave further conclusions to the individual readers, for each reader will find support for his or her own biases somewhere within this publication.

To the professional writers who contributed generously to the formation of this issue we are grateful and honored. In addition, we appreciate the contributions of Marilyn Etienne for the numerous pieces of correspondence she typed, Diana Blum for researching biographical information, Sandy Rich and Jackie Colli of the CCSC Graphics Department for printing the titles, Ronni Danna for her careful typing of photo-ready copy, and the Curry Copy Center for their cheerful service and rapid printing.

Donald Gallo

Partnership in Pleasure

John Hersey

The urge to write is the child of the love of reading.

There is absolutely no use in trying to push young people to communicate, to express themselves, to write clear straight sentences in order to get their thoughts across, to let their fantasies run on the page--unless, long before, you have helped them discover the pleasure in reading.

Not skill in reading, but pleasure.

If there be pleasure in reading, skill in reading will surely come. If there be pleasure in reading, a desire to give that pleasure by writing may also come. That is where good writing begins.

The most exciting pedagogical device that I, as a writer, have heard of in recent years is that of a school system (in New Jersey, I believe, if the person who told me of it was right) where, for one half hour each day, all other activity stops and everyone reads, or is read to. Just for relaxation and pleasure. Everyone. Pupils, teachers, principals, custodians, secretarial help--everyone. There is, for a half hour each day, in that town's schools, a universe of reading.

Would that every school system in the country followed that plan! Our national standards of literacy would soar. Standards of performance in writing--in spelling, grammar, and above all the accurate use of words--would rise. And I have a conviction that splendid new examples of imaginative literature would also emerge.

When a child begins to feel the pleasure, which reading gives, of making pictures in the mind; the pleasure of breathing the life of the reader's own imagination and visual memories and aural range into the mere words the author has put down; the deep pleasure of collaborating with great writers to bring their art to the only completion it can have--then the child has begun to sense that the reader is the writer's partner in creation. Confidence comes with that sense.

Everything stems, of course, from the enthusiasm of the teacher. Pleasure, like the common cold, gets around. A teacher needn't be a writer to give wings to a young writer. But the teacher must be a responsive reader. Some very old-fashioned teaching methods might be worth reviving by such a teacher: reading aloud; having students read aloud; having students memorize; and even dictation.

If a teacher who loves a passage of prose, or of poetry, dictates it to a roomful of pupils, some of them, at least, feeling the teacher's excitement, may have an odd experience.

In writing the passage down, they may have a sense of mimicking the creative act of the author. Ralph Ellison, the author of INVISIBLE MAN, tells of having, as a young man, copied long passages from novels by authors he admired, so that he could savor what they must have felt writing those books. This was part of the training he gave himself.

But whatever is done, it must be done with pleasure as its goal: the pleasure of creation that reading gives. From that pleasure, and only from it, can flow the even higher pleasure of creation that writing gives.

Structured Exposition

William Manchester

...I believe much progress can be made by abandoning formless "creative writing" courses and introducing highly structured courses in expository writing. Students should be required to read contemporary non-fiction works by such authors as Barbara Tuchman, Theodore H. White, Cecil Woodham-Smith, and Alan Moorehead. At the same time, students should be assigned topics which can be researched through the New York Times Index and the Reader's Guide. Next, they should submit Xerox copies of their first drafts, which ought to run about 1,500 words. The instructor should edit the Xerox copies while students edit the originals. Then each student should sit down with the instructor and compare the results. I realize that this technique is arduous and time-consuming for the teacher, but I have done it, and believe me, it works.

On Learning to Write

Kit Reed

Another day in another mood I might have said that the schools are doing all they can to teach children to use the language, that motivation and enrichment programs are all we need to help people learn to write with purity, but that was before my husband came home from a class in which he found it necessary to teach a college sophomore of better than average intelligence which was the noun and which was the verb. Once that has sunk in, they are going on to master prepositions.

I put in some six years in grammar school diagramming sentences. My classmates and I had to draw lines and make sentences march along them. We had to assign places to nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, phrases and clauses. We did it day in and day out, we did it beyond the point of boredom, but when we emerged at the far end of that primitive and not necessarily inspiring education, we did indeed know which was the noun and which was the verb.

I am fairly well convinced that kind of close attention to detail must come almost as early as expression. Without it, there can be no real expression, as words have precise and special meanings and unless they are used correctly the writer cannot make the reader understand what he is trying to say.

This may sound harsh to teachers who devote the major part of their energies to making classroom work interesting and challenging, but I think it's important. As a parent I know we can't assume that children know a thing until we have told them that same thing over and over, and asked them about it several times to make sure they do know it. Sooner or later we all have to eat our pound of spinach, and I am here as a writer to report that there is no way of dressing it up, it's still spinach, and it's essential. In drilling and quizzing on the basic elements of language, the teacher is equipping the child at ground level, getting that equipment in working order for those later exciting, sometimes elaborate or even inspiring flights of expression.

Teachers, Homes, Language

Arthur Miller

I have to assume that the poor writing performance of American students is directly connected with a failure in teaching. Is it possible that in order to stay with it and hold the attention and good will of the students, the teachers have slackened their traditional grip on the rules of the language? Is it possible that the teachers themselves are weak in their capacity to handle the structure of the language? Maybe some sort of remedial course for teachers is necessary. I must tell you that I not infrequently get letters from academic people who make many obvious writing errors.

I would think also, however, that the home atmosphere is probably of some importance. Is there some correlation between bad writing and home attitudes of respect or disrespect for books and writing?

Finally, I think that there is an indecision on the part of so-called authorities as to whether or not the English language ought or ought not be whatever "the people" choose to make of it. I think that the language is important as an instrument of communication and that the worship in recent years of a kind of aboriginal grammar has reduced its capacity to communicate in the name of enhancing its color. Again I find myself returning to the attitudes of the teachers and ask whether they indeed believe in a structure of language and, if so, at what point they will defend it.

Old Starts — New Beginnings

Binnie Klein

My writing experience as a child began (poignantly, the family thought) at age eight, when I produced a piece entitled "Loneliness" on the family Remington.

> Something small is seen in the dark
> As it comes closer, I begin to realize what it is
> It doesn't have any special place or name,
> But I know that I have much of it
> But of course...
> it is loneliness.

This epic met with the grateful and genuinely moist eyes of my parents, and two loving, bright and competitive sisters, who recognized a precocious threat when they saw one. The poem went into my father's top bureau drawer where it lived among love letters from my mother and torn pieces of colored construction paper from school projects I had presented. I'm certain my father still has that yellowing paper, the type burning through the parchment the way period marks do when they are pounded out with all the force of an emotional eight-year-old.

Of course, it was a kind of loneliness which prompted me to write. To gain approval--more, to be something exquisitely rare in the eyes of my parents and teachers--to be one who felt and suffered acutely, and could express it in ways that would encourage recognition in the reader. Even at that young age, I was searching for some underground community to cry to about the long sad car trips with the family, eyes pressed against the cold rear window, counting cars, raindrops, wondering what a broken line meant, watching sedans pass with pointy grey hats inside, men and women sitting pointedly far apart in front seats.

Out of these growing experiences of Holden Caulfield-like confusion, I produced a second poem, which addressed itself to none of these experiences. Now conscious of making a "poem," rather than simply recording feelings, my effort rhymed. Badly. I had constructed an elaborate image of a seascape I had little knowledge of (for fifteen years my horizons were the streets of Newark).

"The sail is up/so white and high,/'tis like a cloud/upon the sky." Thankfully, the middle is lost to me except for the vague and sudden appearance of a man in about the third stanza: "He is a sailor/a sailor he be." Here I experienced the conflicting phenomena of orchestrating with the phrase 'tis (I was soaring, reachable literary heights lay before me), and the gloomy awkwardness of "a sailor he be." Who could I consult about this well meaning syntax? Moreover, why would I want to? When you're riding the crest, you innocently feel entitled to break what looks like new ground. There seemed no other way to express the monumental effect I wished to create. My only in-

fluences were subliminal; I suffered no anxiety of influence. In short, the only anxiety I suffered was in making the damn thing rhyme.

My second confrontation with the concept of rhyme came with parental tormenting: my father's tantalizing statement that absolutely no word in the English language could be found to rhyme with the word orange. Who could argue with someone who did the Sunday Times crossword puzzle in ink?

There is an indulgent insert here: It seems pertinent that I am jotting these thoughts down in a diner in Hartsdale, N.Y., while waiting for the man who shares my life to pick me up. The one cup of tea has lasted forty-five minutes. I am wondering if the humming, white-haired waitress, the cook finally getting his supper of meat loaf and potatoes, the table of young brawny men discussing their next game strategy, have all perfunctorily labeled me a writer, my notebooks and papers spilling over the counter, protecting me from harm. I'm the one who they think knows what they're feeling. I wish I could offer that.

Insert over. Sigh of relief.

As I grew up in Newark, New Jersey, my sisters and father helped me write papers, which remained scholastic obligations, but poetic efforts succumbed to social concerns, until a grade school English teacher began adding comments on my papers that were extremely encouraging and gratifying. I began to write with a sense of anticipating those comments, and that joy my teachers said they felt at the transformation of my thinking.

Teachers who were especially helpful were those who assigned creative writing exercises during class, those who encouraged essays which demanded student opinions, teachers who left their egos at home and wrote almost seductively flattering things like: "Just how old are you, anyway?" at the end of a book report on SIDDARTHA, teachers who encouraged reading books like that.

Attitudes about writing are the potentially formative tools which teachers can impart to students. A teacher may have absolutely no writing experience, but a good ear is essential; this applies to both poetry and prose. Unfortunately, there was little space or time to read things aloud in class when I was in public school. Sometimes the pressure of the specific areas which had to be covered in one semester squeezed out the more potentially creative aspects of school.

The new techniques of teaching poetry have blossomed quickly in the last few years and sources are readily available. Yet there's something disturbingly assembly-line about having everyone begin a poem with "I wish." It removes poetry from its unearthly, lonely place and makes it a commodity. Poetry cannot be forcefed or mastered like scales on the piano. There's little room for mnemonic devices, although I still find it helpful to remember that a simile has "like or as" and a metaphor has an

implied "is." It's like remembering the names of two flowers. I appreciate a solid grammatical background, but one without night terrors and pursed lips, one that allows for an understanding of the colloquialisms of the day, and their appropriate applications. I would not encourage imitation of the styles of the Fireside Poets.

Writing as a communication skill should be taught thoroughly, with whatever tools are available, but creative writing cannot be over-watered or left too dry. Somewhere in-between drills on meter and free association exercises is the happy medium of a teaching environment which nurtures the creating writing experience the child has begun on his own, and the ones yet to come, which will grow with a developing understanding of craft.

Correctness In All Details

Paul Horgan

I can only say that 1. reading should be taught as formerly--not through pictures and over-simplifications but through hard attention to language and how it hangs together; 2. writing should be taught with insistence on its anatomy and correctness in all details, spelling included; 3. "creative writing" should come late in the curriculum--anything now is called by that dubious name; 4. preferably, teachers should also be writers even modestly; 5. attitude: writing is work as well as our most precious social tool.

By Going About It

Mary Stolz

Having said yes, I'd be glad to send along an article on this matter of how young people in our time write, I later wondered why in the world I'd been so foolhardy, since the briefest acquaintance with young people demonstrates that unless driven to the wall they don't write at all. This is also true of adults in our time, and not only those who were recently young. We live in a talking, a pictorial, and, in large part, a mute age. Often I've moaned that Cassandra Austen burned so many of her sister Jane's letters as being too personal for the public gaze. But just look at all the letters that survived. There was a time when people wrote constantly. They wrote poetry, essays, bread & butter notes, broadsides to the editor, reflections on the nesting habits of local birds. They kept diaries and journals. They wrote prodigious numbers of letters. We can blame television, I suppose, for the fact that the pen as a household instrument has melted away like an icicle in a spring thaw. But we could as well blame the invention of the telephone, the telegraph, the radio. Whatever the cause, I fear there will be no return to the age of correspondence, certainly not to a time when dashing off a verse, a homily, a memoir, was as much a part of a literate person's life as reading is today. Literate people still read, but very darn few of them write anything. As for young people, they don't even write thank-you notes, far less essays, stories, verses. Yes, there are exceptions. But an exception is an exception. The majority of people today, young and old, view the thought of writing anything at all as a punitive exercise. So what is there to say? I don't wish to sound completely negative, and don't retract one word of what I've written above, but you ask what I would do if I were invited to teach English in a local high school (or elementary, middle, or junior high school). I'll try to say something about that. To begin with, I'd flatly refuse to attempt to teach writing to any but elementary students. The older ones are vessels that have either been filled with the pleasure of reading and writing already, or are funnels through which you could pour all your passionate love of beautiful letters forever, knowing that nothing would be retained. You don't start to want to write, to have respect for the glory of the language (even to the apparently picayune extreme of wishing to spell correctly and have your verbs and nouns agree), to need to communicate through the word, to have visions that can only be realized through it, if you've already got to junior high school unstirred by that particular yearning. There is a chance that if you've been reading all your life (having learned early on your own insistence, some especially enthralling teacher could lure you toward the magic that is a blank sheet of paper and your own ideas, your own words, and the knowledge that you can arrange them any old way you yourself wish to arrange them. But you would most certainly have been reading, if not writing, all those years before. I have never known or known of a writer who was not a reader from the dazzling first moment when the letters assembled themselves and became the WORD. Therefore--if I were to be offered a class, I'd take the first grade, and read to them, read to them,

read to them, read to them. Then I'd have them read and read and read to me. I'd have books in the school room for browzing through, borrowing, and bringing back. I'd have a day once a month when there could be a book sale, or book swap, so that children could own books. It is very, very important to own your own books when you are a child. Later on, public libraries are fine and perhaps sufficient, but children need the sense of possession. As a child, my version of the security blanket was my books, and I think this can be so with any child. From this marvelous welter of words there must follow to a degree, and, depending on the child, perhaps to a great degree, a feeling of excitement about them. And some may even be led into the happy snare of wanting "to write." I get a good deal of mail from children, and answer all of it, because if someone writes to me I answer. But these letters are for the most part inspired by teachers, who suggest that the class write to "an author." This is all right, and it's even good, I guess, if it brings a child closer to the idea of books as a part of his or her life. But quite frequently a child will sit down at home, without a cue, and write to me simply because he, or she, wishes to. Homemade letters written because a child liked (or, in some strange, infrequent, interesting instances didn't like) a book of mine, tend to be more interesting. Then there are the letters from older children saying they wish to be writers and how should they go about it. I know that my reply to these must be disappointing. But the fact is that you don't decide in your teens that you're going to be a writer. If you're going to be one you've already been at it for some time--you've been writing stories, essays, dramatic skits, poems, whatever--and, because you've been reading all these years, you know how to spell. (Sorry to be a scold, but people who love words treat them courteously.) You don't, as I say, ask someone how to go about being a writer because you already know. You go about it by going about it. But they really feel I have a recipe, so I try to give them one. It is--read a lot and write a lot and read a lot and write a lot and keep it up all your life. To write about anything at all they felt like writing about. Children, almost without exception, like to write verse and hardly need to be persuaded if given the chance. I'd ask them to try plays, and short stories, observations about people, about animals, about things that interest or vex them. They could work (except that it's really play) individually and in groups. Group dramatic presentations are lively affairs, and they are fun. Reading and writing, reading and writing. The one leading to the other, and back again, and forth again.

Words In the Hands of the Masters

William Styron

The only absolutely indispensable factor in the teaching of writing is, it seems to me, an insistence on the necessity of reading. I think too many young people have a vague, amorphous yearning to "be a writer" but have no knowledge of the complexity of the art. The art cannot be learned, in the strict sense of the word, but through wide reading one can at least absorb some of the essentials. I mean, incidentally, reading everything--not just fiction but poetry (especially poetry), drama, history, biography, philosophy. By paying close attention to the way in which words work in the hands of the masters, and by reading copiously, one may if one is lucky (and a little gifted) acquire a style of one's own. But trying to become a writer without having been a reader is like setting forth to sail across the ocean in a boat without sails.

A Feeling for Language

Malcolm Cowley

I haven't any prescription for teaching 6-12 graders to write better except encouraging them to read more and thereby acquire some feeling for the English language. They might also learn poems by heart, and more of them might study French as a means of learning English grammar. Those are old-fashioned prescriptions, but at present writing correctly is also becoming old-fashioned.

Beyond Correctness: Writing Poetry in the Schools — Or, The Short End of the Pump Attendant's Pencil

Alexander Taylor

"Beyond Correctness" is perhaps the most bizarre part of this article's title, given the fact that most of us teaching are grateful if our students can even manage to write a well-organized paragraph with a reasonable topic sentence and specific supporting details. Still, I am sure that others while correcting papers share with me a feeling as nagging as last month's unpaid bills, a sense of dismay and dissatisfaction over many fairly "correct" papers. Are they interesting and worthwhile, or merely last month's warmed-over porridge? Why is it that so many of our students can engage us in interesting conversation but become dull and insipid in their written work?

One answer, I think, is inherent in a story Harold Whitehall tells. One day as a gasoline attendant was filling his car, the gas suddenly began to back up in the tank pipe. "Whoa, when you see the whitecaps coming, you'd better stop," the attendant shouted. Whitehall was struck by the force of the remark but noted that if the attendant had been asked to write it down, he probably would have bitten his pencil to a stub before he got a word on paper.

For numerous reasons (beyond the scope of this paper) students have received over the years so much negative feedback on their written work that their writing has become constrained, self-conscious, and artificial. I believe that teaching the writing of poetry, under the right conditions, can loosen the student up and develop his imaginative powers to a degree that whether or not he becomes a good poet, his prose will be livelier, more concrete, and more interesting.

The first guideline for me in teaching poetry composition is that the papers will not be graded. The students write during the class period, and I spend part of my time circulating among them, trying to make positive responses to what is there and suggesting specific changes where I can. If there are mechanical errors, I correct them with the student on the spot. The students also voluntarily read their papers to the class, an experience which they truly enjoy once they get past their initial shyness and embarrassment. The aim is to provide feedback which is positive and immediate.

My second guideline is to set up an exercise for each writing assignment in such a way that the student has the security of a framework, but freedom within that framework to express his individual feelings in his own style. The exercises in Kenneth Koch's books, WISHES, LIES AND DREAMS and ROSE, WHERE DID YOU GET THAT RED?, have worked on all grade levels for me. And, of course, one begins to develop his own exercises and to swap

exercises with other teachers. Furthermore, one begins to develop exercises for specific purposes. For example, an exercise I use to encourage concrete writing is to have each student write down on slips of paper four concrete nouns and four active verbs. The verbs and nouns are then mixed in separate piles, and each student draws four of each and arranges them into units, adding other parts of speech as he wishes. This use of concrete nouns and active verbs as the core of the poem in no way stifles the students' imaginations. On the contrary, it seems to liberate the imagination while simulatneously giving it the force of specificity, as illustrated by an in-class poem by Bonnie Hoag, an Eastern Connecticut State College student:

> The evergreen tree leaped into
> the bottle and sat while the piano
> gurgled and the clock sang grandfathers.

The study and imitation of imagist poems is also valuable in encouraging concrete expression and close observation. We examine Pound's advice in "A Retrospect" and go in fear of abstractions. Practice with imagist poems also helps cut down that spontaneous flow of gush where Life, Beauty, Goodness, Purity, and Death dance partnerless all over the page. Certainly the training in the use of concrete specific detail is also what helps students write good prose. As Conrad said, the purpose of writing is "to make you see."

My third guideline is to write with my students, and to share my efforts with them as they share their efforts with me. Most importantly they can see that writing is fun and difficult work. It is extremely healthy for the students to see a teacher struggling with his drafts, having his doubts, crossing out lines and writing in new ones--it helps destroy the myth of instant creativity and it encourages revision. It also creates a warm sense of communion and cooperation in the classroom. One of the most pleasant memories of my days in the Connecticut Poets-in-the-Schools Program was a double class at Penny High School where the two cooperating teachers, the coordinator from Central Connecticut State College and I all participated with the students in a writing exercise and read our poems aloud along with the others. Somehow some barriers seemed to have disappeared--they responded more to us as people--and they were more receptive to our criticism and comments.

My final guideline is to encourage students to take chances, to trust what comes to their minds, and to believe in their own unique voices. Sometimes I try to do this with an exercise on simile and metaphor. I dangle an old silver pocketwatch and move among the students, asking them to supply comparisons:

> "Round as a.... Round as a.... Round...."
> "As a moon," says one.
> "Good. Round as a...."
> "As a silver dollar," says another.

But I want them to loosen up more. I don't mention the term cliche, but I try to get them to compare it to something in their own home or from their own memories.

"Round as a...."
"As my grandmother's silver spectacles," shouts another.
"Great! Now say something crazy, turn off your rational mind and let whatever's there float up. Round as a...."
"Round as the red eye of a wounded otter."

The variations are endless. But hopefully the students begin to trust the force and color of their own imaginations and will be readier to take those risks that are necessary for any good writer. After all--no guts, no glory.

Those First Two R's

Hal Borland

"Why," I am asked, "can't today's young folk communicate in writing, and what can be done about it?"

I shall not argue with the assumption except to say that some young folk can write extremely well. Most of those I know can't. And the English teachers I know seem to have no clear idea of what, if anything, to do about it. One teacher I know said, "These young people are not really illiterate. They are oral-minded. And they see no need to learn the formal, literary means of written communication."

There, to me, is an answer close to the basic truth. Anyone, teacher, friend or parent, who thinks of writing in terms of formal, literary communication has already lost the way. If the teacher doesn't know the difference, how can the student be expected to? I believe the written language should be primarily the same as the spoken language, a kind of transcription of the way we talk, smoothed out to eliminate repetition and vulgarisms. That, of course, brings the whole matter down to a conversational level, to the way we talk.

Some critics blame television for shortcomings in the use of the written language. There is a degree of reason in this, but it is not wholly true. Before there was television or radio there were family evenings when the father or mother read aloud, usually from the better-known novels of the day. Children knew the oral use of language, knew how the written language sounded aloud. They still learned to write a comprehensible letter or report. Television has vulgarized the spoken language, perhaps, and it has unfortunately tended to wipe out many colorful speech patterns of our various regions. But so long as there are books and the printed word, and so long as there are capable teachers in the schools, young people should still be able to learn the fundamentals of writing a coherent sentence and a sensible paragraph.

I am inclined to blame the teachers. Of those with whom I have contact, perhaps half can write a clearly phrased letter. How they can be expected to teach anyone to write is beyond my understanding. Too often they can't spell correctly and they mis-use everyday words. They also fall into that yawning trap of triteness and gobbledegook that seems to await too many educators when they open their mouths. A few school boards, aware of these problems, recently required that all their teachers write letters of application for their jobs, just so the board could see if they could write a logical, grammatically acceptable letter. I have not seen any conclusions drawn from this test, but I understand that some of the letters were sad examples of what we would like to call literacy.

I think of these things, and then I recall the experience of an instructor in freshman English at Columbia thirty years ago. He told me, at that time, that most of his time was spent teaching the freshmen in his classes things they should have learned in high school. So it is not a new phenomenon, this illiteracy problem among our young people.

What can be done about it? The best bet I can think of is to teach the teachers, and select those who can and will persuade their students to read. We learn by reading; at least we who write for a living learn to write by reading and by writing. I learned grammar under first-rate teachers. I long ago forgot the terms of grammar--I can't define a gerund or a participial clause. But I learned, deep down, the correct way to use the language and to make it say what I want to say. The rules of speech were embedded deep within me somewhere, and they govern what I write. That, I feel, is the way the language and its use should be taught--so that it becomes a part of the pupil, an instinctive part. Or maybe it is a matter of learning, not of teaching--that those who need and want it will get it, no matter how it is taught. I don't know.

All I know is that the youngsters I know who can write sensible letters and reports are, without exception, readers. The written word, the printed word, the shape and order of sentences and the roundness of paragraphs, are all there in the mind, being engraved deeper every day. Too many teachers don't read anything but their own educational directives, which are frightfully written and full of non-words and vocational hash. Those who do read rational English, and who recognize such barbarisms as "educationwise" and "hopefully" and "early on," teach receptive students to read and to write in a way that others can understand what they are talking about.

Few as they are, God bless such teachers, and more power to them.

Back to Essays

Eugene V. Rostow

Abolish objective testing, and go back to essays. That will reorient high school teaching.

Write and Improve It

Peter De Vries

You're asking me to diagnose symptoms of a patient I've never seen and then suggest a cure. I have no familiarity with the current schoolroom and its occupants--which also includes the teacher, remember. I mean there may be as much bad teaching as bad learning. I've done a few brief stints on the pedagogical side of the desk myself, and I can't imagine what there would be to teaching writing but what there's always been: have the student write something, and if it's defective tell him why, and how he might improve it. Not neglecting the power of example. That is, steer him toward good authors he might be turned on by. That's been important to me. I know I've learned a lot from other writers, superiors whose wits have sharpened mine, whose knowledge has redeemed me from ignorance, and whose perceptions have broadened my horizons. While our models inevitably vary from person to person, and even change for each of us over the years, the force of that inspiration is important--despite the pitfalls of derivativeness. In other words, what you read is important to how you eventually write.

Standards

Barbara Tuchman

I know nothing about teaching or present day school conditions. My only suggestion would come down to: setting firm standards of excellence and performance, grading accordingly and not accepting anything short of acceptable performance.

Lurking Somewhere In the Innards

Herman Raucher

If I were invited to teach writing in our local high school--how would I go about it? With much trepidation. And with a certain amount of respect for the kid who doesn't slot in too easily. I base my answers on my own experiences in high school.

English was never my long suit. Grammar and I were not only incompatible, we were hostile. Over the years I've learned to let my "ear" tell me what is good grammar and what ain't. Subjects, predicates, gerundives, participles, conjugations--they were anathema to me. Still, somehow, they must have found their way into my skull because much of my writing, if nothing else, is considered grammatically correct.

In Flatbush, in Brooklyn, in the early forties, in Erasmus Hall High School, there was only one teacher who held out any hope for me. Miss Weirich, an imperious German type. She allowed as to how I had "an interesting style." What she was really saying was that my grammar was lousy, my sentences incomplete, my infinitives split--but my thrust, the heart of what I was trying to write--somehow got through to her.

I never much cared for Miss Weirich. I preferred the other English teachers who dwelled on Emily Dickinson and knew where the commas went. And, certainly, I never much cared for writing...nor did I ever imagine that, one day, I might earn my livelihood as a writer. Easier for me to fly to the moon. Okay--so how did it happen?

It happened, I suspect, because a certain amount of creativity was always there. Hiding, lurking, cutting class. I painted and sculpted well. But writing? "What Did I Do Last Summer?"...not even I cared about what I did last summer.

Very well, then. A modicum of creativity should be there. And that is something that cannot be fed into the human mind. It is either there or it is not. Not even desire can overcome the lack of creativity. Not all the yearning to be a writer, or all the drive, or all the willingness to suffer will matter a whit--if there is no muse lurking somewhere in the innards. My point being--if a student does not show some creativity in some field, even if it's as foreign a field as wood-cutting or gardening or popular mechanics--forget it. He will never be a writer.

But let us examine what I've just written because that would seem, on the surface, to eliminate many youngsters. Not so--I'm saying that it includes most youngsters. Any kid who ever took ten seconds to study a cloud, or watch the way a bus stuttered up, or spent more than five seconds looking at the

patterns that his laces made in his sneakers--that kid could one day be a writer. It remains to the teacher to point out that fact to him.

It remains to the teacher to not bug a kid with rules. There are no rules but one. And that rule is: There are no rules.

Grammar is one thing. If you want to instruct it, fine--but keep it separate from "creative writing." For if you do not, you will inhibit creativity. Worse--you will drive it out of town and it will never return.

I would encourage my students to keep a diary. (I never did.) I would tell them to write things down and not worry about what or why. I would tell them, for an assignment, "Bring in any amount of words on any subject in any style. It can be about the egg you had for breakfast or your father's mustache. It doesn't matter. You are not competing with anyone for grades. The subject is of your own choosing, therefore you cannot be given a comparative grade. However, Mr. Student, don't try to fake me out because, in doing so, you may well be faking out yourself. And that I will not tolerate. And, believe me, I will know when such is the case."

What I'm suggesting is a throwing-away of accepted procedures. What I'm inviting is a personal, an extremely personal approach to each student's writing. What I'm hoping for is an "everyone into the pool" approach but do your own strokes.

What I'm stating, not as a hypothesis but as an axiom is: "Nobody knows nothing about writing, no how." It is as personal as your bodily functions, and the way you make love, and the way you sip your tea. It should not be approached with fear, but with affection. Each "assignment" should be a blind date, a hope...a constant dream for ultimate fulfillment. And each assignment, upon completion, should be like an old lover...someone from whom you learned something; someone who helped you though you may not have realized it at the time.

There is much talk about "censorship" of the writer. It is invariably thought of in terms of society imposing censorship upon the writer. I suggest that there is another kind of censorship that is of a far more damaging and subtle nature. It comes much earlier but it is a crippler and a killer. And that is the censorship of the writer by his teacher. Watch it. Check it. The teenager with a creative bent is like a chunk of warm wax. He is impressionable, vulnerable. Things lay on him and the impressions harden.

If I were a teacher of writing in a local high school, I would make my classroom into an open house where there is no competition and therefore no frustration. Come in, gang, and do your own thing. All I ask is that you relax, do your best, and

put it on paper. I will help you where I can, but I will not bend you out of shape. And I will never ever minimize what you have written because--what you have written is you, and you have a place and a right to be in this universe.

Everyone Is Inarticulate

Richard Wilbur

I have a feeling that the "bad writing" problem is coextensive with our society. Everyone from President Ford on down is inarticulate, and good speech--clarity of structure, adequacy of vocabulary--is regarded as stuffy and artificial. Verbal adroitness is tolerated only in the stand-up comedian. God help us.

Advice to Students and Teachers

Robert Newton Peck

[Editors note: Although Robert Newton Peck did not write an article for this issue, he did respond openly to my questions in a telephone conversation. On a snow filled Saturday afternoon, I had interrupted his enthusiastic singing at the piano and writing lyrics for a children's opera he has been working on. His opinions were stated without qualifications.]

The best advice about writing to give to kids is: "Show--don't tell." Also: "Forget plot and concentrate on character."

Peck's advice to English teachers: "Stay away from outlines. Nobody learns from outlines. No novel is ever based on an outline. It's based on people." How to get students to write? "Stop talking in terms that don't mean anything. Don't use 'motivation,' use 'GREED.' Everybody understands that."

The Way I See It

Eric Sloane

Asking Eric Sloane to do a piece about the teaching of writing might have been a mistake because my reply could be far from what was expected of me. I do not believe that writing can be taught. Neither can painting or dancing or music or any other art; they can only be furthered and fulfilled but taught--never! Emerson said it: Talent alone cannot make a writer: there must be a man behind the book.

If I had a son who wanted to become a painter, I would first beg him to realize that schooling would not teach him to become an artist; if regarded too important, schooling could even be a detriment to creative ability. If I should be an art teacher, I would give six months to expanding awareness and only a week or so to actual drawing, painting and craftmanship. Likewise if my son wished to write, I would stress that learning why is more important than learning how; an author should not write because he wants to say something but because he has something to say. The craft of putting words together is almost unimportant alongside the art of putting thoughts together, and that is something you must learn all by yourself.

Now that I have shattered the reason I was asked to write this piece, may I explain that my shock treatment is a personal method sometimes deplored by my critics and other readers. If you have ability at all, neither I nor anyone else can discourage you. I would not dare try to teach an apprentice but rather let him watch me at work, to exchange views and know why. Learning how is his responsibility. Of course every writer should have his own technique, and not copy others, but if any student cares to know how and why I write, here are some of my methods:

Most of my books are not composed at the typewriter; the typewriter and scissors, scrap paper and rubber cement mould my thoughts together but thoughts arrive in my automobile, in bed, building a stone wall or listening to music. The method of sitting before a blank piece of paper to build up a story just doesn't work with me. I used to keep a pad at my bedside, I always have one in my car (a few accidents and traffic violations have resulted) and when I come up against a blank wall on paper, I go outside and start working on the stone wall outside my studio. How the answers come then!

I am not a church-goer but some of my methods are almost Baptist. I believe that the creative mind is constantly making tiny prayers. The artist is always asking--is this the right color? Is this shape too tall? Should I add a highlight or shadow here or there? Believe it or not, if a tube of vermillion falls, I take that as an answer and use that color at once. The miraculous answers arrive in strange ways and must be watched for. The same phenomena occur in my writing; if I have trouble

with a thought, I stop work, take a walk, have a cup of coffee or forget it for an hour or a week. I know the answer will come. You think I'm crazy? All right, I'm not asking you to copy me--I am just telling how I do it.

I type with five line-spaces which seldom is enough to accommodate all the necessary changes or corrections. A sentence that sounds carefree and flippant, spontaneous and off-the-cuff, might be the result of many changes and a lot of work. My sort of writing is often the art of applying the seat of the pants to the seat of a chair--one bit of inspiration and a lot of perspiration. Yet every now and then a thought comes through in a minimum of words, worthy of a five-second "time out" for thanks.

When my wife changes words or contests my writing in any way, I raise hell: I argue, squirm and finally prove how I was right. Then I quietly consider her point and make the change. I'm no hen-pecked author--I put up a fuss! The critic is a necessary evil and criticism is an evil necessity--don't belittle criticism.

Don't write (or do anything else) to make money. I write and paint as an involuntary exercise and if I ever regarded it as a job, my life would suddenly be empty and without pleasure. Schools and colleges used to exist for the purpose of moulding young people's minds and making them better equipped for contact with the rest of the world. Now children are sent to school by their parents for the purpose of getting a degree to earn a better salary. Some children are baffled when they learn that the world's experts and teachers often make the least salary and the world's richest men are often unschooled.

Writing to compete is bad manners and bad thinking. Being yourself is paramount. Nowadays competition is supposed to be the major part of business, even of sports. Yet no doctor or inventor or painter or writer ever did great works by reason of competition. You can use a lot of four letter words or stab your wife and do things to make the headlines but your writing is still you. The only one you should compete with is yourself (to do better tomorrow than you did yesterday). If that makes me sound like a square, so be it--my typewriter paper is that sort of shape and I respect tradition.

Finally, I deplore people who read to pass away the time; they usually buy books written by authors who write for the same reason. I feel there should be a reason for everything, mainly for writing. A painter should be more than someone who takes paint from a tube and puts it pleasingly on canvas. An artist is one who sees (a see-er) and whose reason for being is to help those who did not see. A writer is one who thinks, and whose reason for being is to help those who did not think.

That's the way I see it. That's the way I work.

Lined Paper

Elizabeth George Speare

It is not a simple thing to learn to ski, to play a guitar, to speak a foreign language or to write well in our own tongue. With the exception of those rare gifted souls who appear to have tumbled into such skills straight from the cradle, most of us have discovered that no amount of eagerness, expensive equipment or instruction can assure that our early attempts will be carried off with aplomb. We learn by a dual process: deliberate repetition reinforced by unconsciously acquired knowledge. Both elements demand time and guidance. It is obvious, therefore, that anything I can find to say about writing will be of little comfort to overburdened teachers, because it is bound to imply a great deal of lined paper, the sight of which, though my own teaching years are long past, I myself still find depressing.

To begin at the very beginning, I do not see how anyone can attempt to write until the skeleton structure of a sentence is as familiar and automatically recognized as the alphabet. It really is not much more difficult; we forget the slow fumbling by which a small child learns his ABC's. Admittedly, picking out subjects and verbs and objects is dull work. I should like to think that some Dr. Suess or Sesame Street, some such wizard of intriguing repetition, has already devised a way to make a game of it. But fun or no, I believe it has to be mastered, and I think that boredom is the lesser risk. (Though as the above mentioned masters have proved, a sense of the ridiculous is an asset; an outrageous sentence has the same bone structure as a dull one and can surprise a flicker of attention.)

I wish that somehow all this could be done so thoroughly in an early grade that it would never again be a stumbling-block. Once a child has mastered the basic elements of a sentence, he has in hand his most essential tool. Next he can acquire the attachments--the modifying words and phrases and clauses. By the high school years these fundamental tools should be so firmly in hand that the way will be cleared to study the organization of sentences and finally paragraphs in coherent and effective sequence.

From the very beginning a child must practice using his tools. I am not tossing out this platitude lightly, for I very well understand that the practice is going to demand all the ingenuity and endurance a teacher possesses. Perhaps in the future some genius will devise a writing machine as magical as the calculator which has whisked away the drudgery of long division. Right now I cannot see any substitute for that lined paper or for the teacher who is willing to accept the burden of it.

Of course there are always going to be pupils who will at once romp ahead of every requirement. These are not necessarily going to be Writers, but their way through school and beyond

will be smoother and more pleasurable because they enjoy this means of communication. Others, doubtless the majority, will never find the written word their happiest medium, but there is no reason why it should be forever a mystery and a torture. Even the most reluctant deserve the confidence of knowing that they possess, on the occasions when they are forced to use it, a workable tool.

By contrast the second part of the dual process sounds easy. Actually it is far more difficult and challenging, because the imagination and spirit and understanding which will presently transform, or fail to transform, those first simple sentences into a true and persuasive communication of ideas are the sum of every moment of a child's experience, including the years before he enters his first classroom. Every kindergarten teacher recognizes with delight the child who has been talked to, read aloud to, given a share in the complexity of the adult world, and also recognizes with dismay how difficult it is going to be for the school to make up to the child who has been deprived of these experiences. It is comforting to know that in this aspect of learning to write the teacher of English carries only a small share of the burden. Every person in the child's world, above all his parents, has a part in the process. The science teacher who fosters curiosity and wonder, the art teacher who opens a world of color and form, the coach who inspires fair play and courage, all of these are teaching a young person to write by teaching him first to see and to feel. TV, despite its hazards and stupidities, can contribute richly. Let us be thankful that we have allies everywhere, even when some of them appear at times to be competitors.

This universal classroom, however, which gives the child so much to say, too often fails to give him a vocabulary with which to say it. I think that one reason why a young person dislikes writing is that he discovers that the words at his command do not measure up to his ideas, just as a small child discovers that his simple wooden blocks cannot build the tower he has imagined. Knowing too well that his English teacher will not find acceptable the current terms which spring so readily to his tongue, the would-be writer finds himself pen-tied. And far too many adults remain all their lives in this same cul-de-sac. Toy manufacturers have rushed to meet the child's need for creation with an infinite complexity of colorful plastic. How wonderful if we could present a young writer with an intriguing Lego set of words with which to fit together his thoughts!

On second thought, we do have just such a treasure, an inexhaustible Lego set of words. We have books. Our greatest advantage is our own love for them, and encouraging children to read is our responsibility and our delight. I would also like to include a special plea for reading out loud. Most parents, however conscientious in the early years, feel it is time to abandon reading out loud when their children first encounter Dick and Jane. But children love and need to be read aloud to; in fact young adults continue to be enthralled when rarely they are

so indulged in high school and college. Does this really encourage laziness, as is so often alleged? I am convinced that any such tendency is more than balanced by the stimulation of new words and ideas. When a teacher has found something so exciting that it has to be shared, I would trust enthusiasm to overcome laziness.

Indispensable as this unconscious learning has proved to be, I believe we have all come to rely too heavily upon it. So, since I have been invited to speak, I must in the end stress the truism on which my own education has been based. Good writing is only achieved by rewriting. In my own experience, a first draft is often only a groping toward what I want to say. When, after a second or third draft, I am satisfied that I have said it as clearly and concisely as I am able, then I may try again for a touch of grace. But students find this persistence appalling. When I tell a classroom that every book has been written from beginning to end at least three times, I am greeted by shocked, even pitying faces. And for teachers the thought is even more discomforting, for there is no point in either writing or rewriting unless someone is going to read what you have written. A rewritten paragraph presupposes a reread paragraph, not simply blue-pencilled for misspelled words or dangling modifiers, but thoughtfully assessed, its weaknesses pointed out and its strengths applauded.

Knowing all the difficulties, perhaps, in today's classrooms, even the impossibility, I still must say what I believe. In learning to write well something more is required than plenty of lined paper. The hard fact is that this paper must find its way back to teachers who care.

Summary of the New Copyright Law And Fair Use By Teachers

Basically, law 5.22 says "spontaneous" photocopying of copyrighted materials for classroom use is "fair."

WHAT YOU MAY DO:

1. Make a single copy of:
   a chapter from a book
   an article from a periodical or newspaper
   a short story, essay, or poem from a collection or anthology
   a chart, graph, diagram, drawing, cartoon, or picture, from a book, periodical, or newspaper

2. Make multiple copies for classroom use only one to a student of the following:
   poems less than 250 words or two pages long
   excerpts of less than 250 words from longer poems
   complete articles or stories if less than 2500 words
   excerpts of less than 1000 words or 10 percent of the prose work
   one chart, graph, diagram, drawing, cartoon, or picture per book or periodical.

WHAT YOU MAY NOT DO:

1. Don't make multiple copies for classroom use if the work has already been copied for another class in the same school

2. Don't make multiple copies of a poem, article, story, or essay from the same author more than once a term

3. Don't make multiple copies from the same collection or the same issue of a periodical more than three times a term

4. Don't make multiple copies of anything more than nine times a term

5. Don't make copies of consumable materials such as workbooks.

Reprinted with permission from the JOURNAL OF READING, 20, March 1977, 497.

Biographical Sketches of Contributors

HAL BORLAND has written mostly in the fields of nature--as a former outdoor writer for the NEW YORK TIMES and contributing editor to AUDUBON MAGAZINE and as author of several books, among which is COUNTRY MAN'S WILDFLOWERS. But he is best known in secondary schools as the author of WHEN THE LEGENDS DIE, one of the more sensitive and realistic novels about American Indians available for teenagers. His most recent publication is HAL BORLAND'S BOOK OF DAYS.

MALCOLM COWLEY has attained a distinguished position in literary fields as a writer, critic, and literary historian. He has also edited collections of the works of Hawthorne, Hemingway, Faulkner, Whitman, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

PETER DeVRIES gained fame with THE TUNNEL OF LOVE and THE MACKEREL PLAZA and has since carried on with his special brand of sacred and profane humor in REUBEN REUBEN, THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB, and WITHOUT A STITCH IN TIME. His most recent book is I HEAR AMERICA SWINGING.

JOHN HERSEY was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1945 for A BELL FOR ADANO. His other numerous books have been widely read in high schools, most notably THE CHILD BUYER, HIROSHIMA, and A SINGLE PEBBLE. In addition to producing THE WRITER'S CRAFT and a biography of Ralph Ellison, he has been active in various citizens groups concerned with public education in America and has won attention most recently with MY PETITION FOR MORE SPACE.

PAUL HORGAN, a faculty member at Wesleyan University, is best known for his books about people and history in the American Southwest. Most notable are the highly acclaimed GREAT RIVER: THE RIO GRANDE IN NORTH AMERICAN HISTORY, WHITEWATER, and LAMY OF SANTA FE, HIS LIFE AND TIMES. He is also the author of APPROACHES TO WRITING.

BINNIE KLEIN in 1975 won honorable mention in the Mademoiselle College Poetry Competition, received three awards in the N.Y. Poetry Forum, and toured the Connecticut Poetry Circuit for the Connecticut Commission on the Arts. One of the founders of SOME magazine, her poems have appeared in PANACHE, NEW, and THE MINNESOTA REVIEW with upcoming contributions in SUNBURY MAGAZINE and the ARDIS ANTHOLOGY OF NEW AMERICAN POETRY.

WILLIAM MANCHESTER has been a reporter, editor, novelist, biographer, and narrative historian as well as a professor at Wesleyan University. He has written about the Rockefellers, the Reuthers, and more recently THE ARMS OF KRUPP. In the late '60s he gained world-wide attention for his controversial THE DEATH OF A PRESIDENT. More recent praise has been given to his forty year social history of the United States, THE GLORY AND THE

DREAM. CONTROVERSY AND OTHER ESSAYS IN JOURNALISM is his latest publication.

ARTHUR MILLER is one of America's foremost dramatists and literary figures. In addition to ALL MY SONS, THE PRICE, and AFTER THE FALL, his THE CRUCIBLE and DEATH OF A SALESMAN--for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1949--have become classics which are widely read in secondary schools and colleges throughout the country.

DORIS ORGEL is both an author and a translator of children's books, among which are IN A FORGOTTEN PLACE; BARTHOLOMEW, WE LOVE YOU!; BARON MUNCHAUSEN: 15 TRULY TALL TALES; and THE GRANDMA IN THE APPLE TREE.

ROBERT NEWTON PECK left the busy world of Madison Avenue for the quiet of rural Connecticut where he stormed into the young adult book world with A DAY NO PIGS WOULD DIE. He has since continued to pour out a fantastic number of popular books for young children and teenagers, including FAUN, SOUP, MILLIE'S BOY, and HANG FOR TREASON. In the near future he will publish THE KING'S IRON, TRIG, and LAST SUNDAY.

HERMAN RAUCHER first came to the attention of adolescents and teachers as the author of THE SUMMER OF '42. A former writer of original television dramas for "Studio One," "Alcoa Hour," and "Goodyear Playhouse," he has more recently turned to writing screenplays for Hollywood. His most recent novel of interest to adolescents is ODE TO BILLY JOE, for which he also wrote the screenplay.

KIT REED, twice named New England Newspaperwoman of the Year, has published short articles in several magazines. Her most recent publications include TIGER RAG, CRY OF THE DAUGHTER and the well-received CAPTAIN GROWNUP.

EUGENE ROSTOW has had a distinguished career in law, government, and politics. Presently Sterling Professor of Law at Yale University, he was Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs, 1966-69, and has published several books, including LAW, POWER, AND THE PURSUIT OF PEACE and PEACE IN BALANCE.

ERIC SLOANE's broad views of America have been reflected in his writings as well as in his paintings. His diverse interests and expertise include meteorology, early American tools, and American history. He is responsible for the construction of the Hall of Atmospheres in the American Museum of Natural History and for the murals in the new Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. His publications include THE SPIRITS OF '76, OUR VANISHING LANDSCAPE, AN AGE OF BARNS, I REMEMBER AMERICA, and RECOLLECTIONS IN BLACK & WHITE.

ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE is best known for her well-researched historical novels for young people, two of which have received the

coveted Newbery Award: THE BRONZE BOW and THE WITCH OF BLACKBIRD POND set in Colonial Wethersfield, Connecticut.

MARY STOLZ' contribution to literature for older children and young adults is legendary, each reader having her or his own favorites, including THE BULLY OF BARKHAM STREET, THE SEAGULLS WOKE ME, BY THE HIGHWAY HOME, and LEAP BEFORE YOU LOOK. Some of her books have been published in nearly thirty languages and in Braille.

WILLIAM STYRON as a young writer distinguished himself in the literary world and has continued to do so. His most noteworthy publications have been LIE DOWN IN DARKNESS, SET THIS HOUSE ON FIRE, and the controversial THE CONFESSIONS OF NAT TURNER for which he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1968.

ALEXANDER TAYLOR's poems have appeared in publications as varied as THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE LADIES HOME JOURNAL, THE MASSACHUSETTS REVIEW, and FIDDLEHEAD. He has held John Hay and Fulbright fellowships; translated numerous poems from Danish to English, most notably THE SELECTED POEMS OF BENNY ANSERSEN; has been on the faculty at Eastern Connecticut State College; and is the founder and editor of the Curbstone Press.

BARBARA TUCHMAN's keen insights into world affairs are reflected in her work as a philosopher and essayist. Twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize--for THE GUNS OF AUGUST in 1963 and for STILWELL AND THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE IN CHINA in 1972--she continues to publish significant articles on public affairs in THE NATION, THE NEW REPUBLIC, and THE ATLANTIC MONTHLY.

RICHARD WILBUR, a member of the English Department at Wesleyan University for twenty years, is one of the country's most honored modern poets. Published in several anthologies used in secondary schools, he has received numerous honors and awards, including the Pulitzer Prize in 1957 for THINGS OF THIS WORLD. His most recent published collections include WALKING TO SLEEP, OPPOSITES, and THE MIND READER: NEW POEMS.